

1 4 1966

USIA May Curtail Foreign News Center

By Tony Brenna

The Foreign Correspondents' Center in New York—located a stone's throw from the United Nations building and understood to cost the Federal government \$25,000 a year in rent alone—is threatened with closure.

Originating from an idea conceived by the late Edward R. Murrow, the center opened in 1961 with support from the Kennedy administration. Now, according to spokesmen for the 500 journalists who use the center and are representative of a world-wide audience, the Johnson administration is seeking to "deprive us of this most valuable work-base, an installation which over the years of its existence has provided a unique public relations platform from which to reach newsmen of all nationalities."

Foreign Press Association members, principal users of the facility, expressed dismay at the unexpected news that the United States Information Agency, which, with the White House and the State Department, sponsors the center, is considering terminating the lease on the premises at East 46th Street, "on grounds of economy."

Some correspondents representing overseas media refused to accept the "economy" explanation and charged that UN Ambassador Arthur J. Goldberg, was "unhappy and miffed" that it existed as a place where foreign policy news could be fed to the press without his direct supervision.

'Tug-of-War' Suspected

According to Jeffrey Blyth, New York correspondent of the *London Daily Mail* and acting FPA president, "there is a growing suspicion among our members that foreign correspondents in this city are becoming victims of a domestic tug-of-war between the U.S. Mission to the UN and the State Department in Washington."

"This is a USIA matter and as such is being dealt with in Washington. Ambassador Goldberg has nothing to say in this matter . . ." Francis W. Carpenter, the U.S. Mission's information officer, told E&P when asked to comment. He added: "What we are trying to do is work out something to please all parties."

FPA News, association jour-

nalists said that plans for a new, possibly smaller, center were under consideration.

The U.S. government, he was also reported to have said at a meeting with reporters, was aware of the value of the press center to foreign journalists, and was willing to meet representatives to the FPA to discuss the situation.

• Leonard Marks, director of the USIA in Washington, was in Europe and unavailable for comment. A spokesman for USIA said "We are looking for a consolidation of that center which has not been used to the extent that was originally envisaged."

FPA spokesman Blyth said that if the center is closed down and replaced by a small office, some foreign newsmen covering the U.S. for newspapers which are unable to maintain New York offices will be deprived of the valuable news sources available at the center.

The center provides AP and UPI wire services as well as the government's Washington wire, sound recording facilities, typewriters, magazines, reference books and a library. It is used by the foreign press for interviews, as a platform for military and governmental speakers, for film shows and social events.

"What is particularly disappointing," Blyth added, "is that next year, the FPA celebrates its 50th anniversary. A series of events currently being planned was to culminate in a gala dinner to which it had been hoped to invite President Johnson as guest of honor."

USIA recently moved the center's director, Barry Bishop, a foreign service officer and one-time Dallas newsmen, back to Washington. He assumed control of the center last December.

'Through Your Eyes'

It was in 1961 that President Kennedy signified his approval of the center. He sent the following message to foreign correspondents on the occasion of the opening: "On behalf of the American people and government, I welcome you to our Foreign Correspondents Center.

"As a former newspaperman I perhaps have a deeper appreciation than many of the importance of the press in building a peaceful community. If we who

to understand each other, there must be a free and constant flow of information among peoples and nations. To a large extent, the people of your countries will view the United States through your eyes.

"We want to make it as easy as possible for you to cover this large, complex and many-sided country. For this reason we have established this center to make available to you whatever assistance you may require which is within our ability to provide. Truth is often elusive and rarely simple; if our center helps you in the pursuit of truth, we shall feel adequately rewarded."

STAT